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PROGRAMME QUESTIONS: EVALUATION

Topics for future in-depth evaluations

Note by the Secretariat

SUMMARY

The present note is submitted in line with the provisions of regulation 7.2 and rule 107.2 (c) (i) and (iii) of the Regulations and Rules Governing Programme Planning, the Programme Aspects of the Budget, the Monitoring of Implementation and the Methods of Evaluation. It contains background information and recommendations regarding future topics for in-depth evaluations.

* E/AC.51/1993/1.

I. BACKGROUND

1. Regulation 7.2 of the Regulations and Rules Governing Programme Planning, the Programme Aspects of the Budget, the Monitoring of Implementation and the Methods of Evaluation, stipulates that "an evaluation programme as well as a timetable for intergovernmental review of evaluation studies shall be proposed by the Secretary-General and approved by the General Assembly". Rule 107.2 (c) (i) provides that the evaluation proposals submitted by the Secretary-General to the General Assembly for its approval "shall include a list of programmes or portions of programmes to be covered on a regular, periodic basis by in-depth evaluations and a timetable indicating the years in which the related reports are due". Rule 107.2 (c) (iii) provides that "at least one in-depth evaluation study shall be undertaken each year" and that "such study shall normally be completed within two years" after approval by the Committee of the study design in the progress report.

2. In a report entitled "Programme evaluation in the United Nations: assessment of evaluation activities and proposals for strengthening the role of evaluation", the Secretary-General listed the subjects of in-depth evaluations for the period 1979-1992 and those scheduled for 1993-1995 and stated that a timetable was needed for in-depth evaluations during the last biennium of the current medium-term plan, 1996-1997 (A/47/116, para. 63).

3. Each in-depth evaluation study consists of three reports, namely a progress report on the study design and scope of the study as well as preliminary findings, the in-depth evaluation report itself and the triennial review/follow-up reports. The following table shows in-depth evaluations and related activities undertaken during the medium-term plan period 1984-1989 extended to 1991:

Table 1. Evaluation-related reports, 1984-1991

	Progress reports	In-depth evaluation reports	Triennial reviews/follow-up reports	Reports to General Assembly on evaluation
1984	a/	UNDP-financed technical cooperation activities of UNIDO in manufactures		
1985	a/	Drug control	Transnational corporations Natural resources: mineral resources Manufactures	
1986	a/	Population	Department of Public Information (DPI)	
1987	Development issues and policies Human rights	Electronic data processing and information systems (EDPIS)	Department of Technical Cooperation for Development (DTCD) b/ UNDP-financed technical cooperation activities in manufactures	
1988	Human settlements	Development issues and policies c/	Drug control DPI (follow-up report)	A/43/179
1989	Disarmament	Development issues and policies Human rights	Population	

	Progress reports	In-depth evaluation reports	Triennial reviews/follow-up reports	Reports to General Assembly on evaluation
1990	Science and technology	Human settlements	(EDPIS) d/	A/45/204
	Disarmament (2nd progress report)			
	Economic Commission for Africa (ECA): development issues and policies			
1991	Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR)	Disarmament ECA: development issues and policies	Development issues and policies	

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a/ The procedure of preceding an in-depth evaluation by a progress report two years in advance was introduced in 1987.

b/ The study on DTCD was undertaken by JIU; CPC requested the Central Evaluation Unit to undertake the triennial review.

c/ Interim report.

d/ As decided by CPC, no triennial review was required.

II. SCHEDULED EVALUATION

4. The following evaluation reports are in progress for the period of the current medium-term plan 1992-1997:

Table 2. Evaluation-related reports, 1992-1997

	Progress reports	Evaluation reports	Triennial reviews/follow-up reports	Report to General Assembly on evaluation
1992	Social development	(Science and technology) a/	Human rights	A/47/116
1993	United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA)	UNHCR	Human settlements Human rights (follow-up)	
1994		Social development	ECA: development issues and policies	(Report due)
1995		UNRWA b/		
1996			UNHCR	(Report due)
1997			Social development	

a/ As decided by CPC, no in-depth evaluation was required.

b/ A decision as to whether an in-depth evaluation on UNRWA is to be undertaken will be made by the Committee at its thirty-third session.

5. In his report on programme evaluation last year, the Secretary-General provided the following list of programmes which had not been subject to in-depth evaluation in the past (A/47/116, para. 64):

Table 3. Substantive programmes not yet subject to in-depth evaluation of the medium-term plan for the period 1992-1997

Programme number	Programme
1	Good offices and peacemaking, peace-keeping, research and the collection of information
2	Political and Security Council affairs
3	Political and General Assembly affairs and Secretariat services
4	Special political questions, trusteeship and decolonization
5	Question of Palestine
6	Elimination of apartheid
8	Peaceful uses of outer space
9	International law
10	Law of the sea and ocean affairs
11	International cooperation for economic and social development - overall issues and policies, including coordination
13	International trade a/
14	Development finance, resource flows and external debt
15	Least developed, land-locked and island developing countries, and special programmes
16	Environment
19	Natural resources b/
20	Energy
21	Public administration and finance
24	Statistics c/
37	Disaster relief and mitigation, and special emergency programmes
45	Africa: critical economic situation, recovery and development

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a/ The subprogrammes on manufactures and transfer of technology have been evaluated in the past.

b/ The subprogramme on mineral resources was evaluated in 1982.

c/ Certain outputs have been included in the in-depth evaluation of the population programme.

6. In the same report (A/47/116, para. 65), the Secretary-General also pointed out that with respect to the regional programmes, subprogrammes concerned with the following topics have not been subject to in-depth evaluation:

- Food and agriculture;
- Marine affairs;
- Least developed, land-locked and island developing countries;
- Public administration and finance;
- Environment;
- Industrial development;
- International trade and development finance;
- Natural resources;
- Energy;
- Transport and communication;
- Statistics;
- Tourism.

7. At the thirty-second session of the Committee, the following topics for in-depth evaluation for 1996 and 1997 were mentioned in the discussion: environment, human rights, international trade, narcotic drugs, and statistics. The Committee postponed its decision on the topics for in-depth evaluation for 1996 and 1997 (A/47/16 (Part I), paras. 121, 125). It should be noted that the drug control programme was the subject of an in-depth evaluation in 1985 and the human rights programme in 1989, with triennial reviews in 1988 and 1992 respectively and, in the case of human rights, a follow-up report in 1993.

III. RECOMMENDATIONS

8. Several considerations should be borne in mind in determining topics for future in-depth evaluations:

(a) The existence of major events, scheduled for 1996 or after, which have programmatic implications and therefore could benefit from in-depth evaluations:

1996: Ninth session of the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development;

1996: United Nations Conference on Human Settlements (Habitat II);

1999: Anticipated holding of a third international peace conference or other suitable international conference in the context of the United Nations Decade of International Law (1990-1999);

(b) The need to examine a programme generally considered successful in order to learn lessons applicable to related programmes;

(c) Significant recent expansion of the programme or changes in the problems addressed by it;

(d) Findings of programme performance reports which point to substantial departures from programmed commitments.

9. It is also pertinent to recall that disarmament is the only programme in the political area that has been subject to in-depth evaluation to date and that there has been a significant increase in the number of United Nations peace-keeping missions in recent years. Many of the new operations take the United Nations beyond its traditional roles. The General Assembly in its resolution 46/48, paragraph 17, "encourages the Secretary-General to continue to examine all aspects of peace-keeping operations ... in order to ensure that they are conducted in an efficient and cost-effective manner" and in its resolution 47/71, paragraph 33, "invites the Secretary-General to review, with a view to streamlining procedures and enhancing effectiveness, the applicable United Nations financial and administrative regulations concerning peace-keeping operations".

10. Based upon the above-mentioned considerations and the discussion in CPC as indicated in paragraph 7 above, the following schedule for programmes to be subject to in-depth evaluations is proposed. The in-depth evaluation to be scheduled for 1996 will require a progress report to be submitted to the Committee in 1994, and a decision on the topic is therefore required at this session of CPC. Following standard procedures, the progress report would, in each case, propose a precise focus of the study.

1996: International trade, in particular those aspects of the work of the secretariat of UNCTAD that have not yet been subject to in-depth evaluation and the corresponding programmes in the regional commissions;

1997: The Peace-keeping operations component of programme 1: Good offices and peacemaking, peace-keeping, research and the collection of information;

1998: International law, in particular the subprogrammes on the progressive development and codification of international law, and on the progressive harmonization and unification of the law of international trade;

1999: Statistics, consisting of the subprogrammes on developing statistical concepts and methods for use by Member States, on applying advanced technology in collecting, processing and disseminating integrated statistics, on collecting, compiling and disseminating international statistics and on coordinating international statistical programmes;

2000: Environment, consisting, inter alia, of subprogrammes on environmental assessment, environmental management measures, environmental awareness and global and regional cooperation.